

Surveys in Spanish Real Estate: What They Are & Why They Matter

When buying property in Spain, surveys are not legally mandatory in most cases. Unlike some countries, there is no requirement for a full structural survey.

However, “not mandatory” does **not** mean “not important.” Surveys and technical reports are **key tools for risk management**, especially for older, rural, or renovated properties.

Understanding the types of surveys, who prepares them, and when they are relevant can save buyers from costly surprises.

Types of Surveys You Can Expect

In Spain, surveys generally fall into three categories:

1. **Technical or Structural Survey**
2. **Planning & Legal Conformity Checks**
3. **Energy Performance Certification (EPC / Certificado Energético)**

Each serves a distinct purpose and carries a different level of legal and practical weight.

1. Technical / Structural Survey

Purpose:

A detailed inspection of the physical condition of the property.

Prepared by:

A qualified **architect (arquitecto)** or **technical architect (arquitecto técnico)**.

What it covers:

- Structural condition (walls, beams, foundations)
- Roofs, terraces, balconies
- Damp, cracks, subsidence, or other visible defects
- Plumbing, electrics, and installations (visual inspection)
- Estimated repair or maintenance costs

When it's most relevant:

- Older properties
- Villas or rural homes
- Properties intended for renovation
- Properties showing visible defects

Key point:

This survey is optional but **strongly recommended**. Defects discovered after purchase are usually the buyer's responsibility.

2. Planning & Conformity Surveys

Purpose:

Confirms that the property is **legally compliant**.

Also called:

- Certificate of Conformity
- Urban Planning Report

Prepared by:

Architects or engineers, sometimes submitted to the Town Hall.

What it checks:

- Property matches **planning permissions**
- Aligns with **Cadastre and Land Registry records**
- Can obtain a **Licencia de Primera Ocupación (LPO)** or **AFO status**

When it matters:

- Properties without an LPO
- Rural properties or land plots
- Extensions, alterations, or renovations
- Mortgage or resale planning

Key point:

This survey focuses on **legal risk**, not physical condition.

3. Energy Performance Certificate (EPC / Certificado Energético)

Purpose:

Measures the property's energy efficiency.

Required by law:

- Mandatory for **selling or renting** property in Spain.

What it assesses:

- Energy efficiency rating (**A–G**)
- CO₂ emissions
- Insulation, windows, heating and cooling systems

Who issues it:

A **certified technician** registered with the regional authority.

Why it matters:

- Required before marketing the property
- Impacts ongoing **running costs**
- Increasingly relevant for **future regulations and renovations**

How Surveys Fit Into the Buying Process

- Surveys are typically conducted **after the reserva** (reservation agreement).
- They are used to **verify legal compliance** and **identify physical issues** before signing a private purchase contract.
- New-build properties usually include a **10-year structural guarantee**, while older homes do not.
- Technical certificates for **water and electricity (boletines / potencia)** may also be required.
- Seasonal considerations: Buying in summer may hide winter-related problems (e.g., damp or heating issues) and vice versa.
- Future planning: Check for expansion possibilities (extensions, pool legality, community restrictions).
- Cross-check survey findings with the **Nota Simple** and **Escritura** to confirm what was actually built.

Summary & Key Takeaways

- Surveys are **not legally mandatory** in Spain, but strongly advised, particularly for older, rural, or renovation properties.

- Use a combination of **technical/structural surveys**, **planning/conformity checks**, and **energy certificates** to reduce risk.
- Always work with **qualified professionals**: architects, technical architects, or certified energy assessors.
- Check **seasonal issues** and verify documentation against official records.
- Ensure any new-build property has the **LPO** and 10-year structural insurance.

Properly conducted surveys **protect your investment**, reduce unforeseen costs, and provide peace of mind when buying property in Spain.
